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Just Like in the Movies

About 500 Washington correspondents were polled recently on which federal agency's public information office provides them "with the maximum amount of usable information." Justice won. But the CIA, which has no public information office, finished in a third-place tie with the White House and State Department. A curious reporter followed through by calling CIA - the number is in the phone book.

"Is this public information?"

"This is Commander Moran."

"Commander Moran, have you heard CIA tied for third as the most helpful agency to newsmen?"

"No, I didn't. This is news to me."

"Are you pleased?"

"I don't know whether I am or not. . . . Well, I am, personally, because we're in such a difficult position. . . . Most of the time all we can say is 'No Comment'."

"What kind of information are you able to give? Can you say how many people work at CIA, for instance?"

"This we're unable to comment on."

"Well, does CIA turn out any press releases, or do you conduct press tours or anything like that?"

"This we're unable to comment on."

"How long have you been handling this job, Commander?"

"About a year."

"... Where's the man who had the job before you?"

"This we're unable to comment on. He's still with the agency."

"Okay, Commander, thank you."

"Just a minute. Do you mind telling me where you got this information? ... When did you get it? ... And your name again?"

The reporter told him and said goodbye. A few minutes later, the phone rang. It was Commander Moran, asking if the reporter worked there. A colleague said yes, but when the reporter picked up the receiver there was a click. Just like in the movies.